

Oregon Insider Article

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Portland Harbor Update

Upland Site Work

In 1997, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted a study to investigate contaminated sediments in Portland Harbor. At that time, there were about 16 upland cleanup sites in the harbor. The results of the sampling study clearly showed that a comprehensive site discovery effort was needed to identify additional sources of sediment contamination.

As a result of that site discovery effort, DEQ is now working with over 40 sites along the Harbor. All of these additional sites, with one exception, have entered into DEQ's Voluntary Agreement Program, and the owners are working cooperatively with the Agency to conduct the necessary investigations and remediation. The Table below indicates the progress made by DEQ in the first part of this year, in terms of the number of sites and types of activities.

Type Of Cleanup Activity and Agreements	January 2001	June 2001
Preliminary Assessment	1	1
Expanded Preliminary Assessment	9	14
Remedial Investigation	20	24
Remedial Design	2	2
Cleanup completed, monitoring ongoing	2	2
Totals	34	43

More detailed information on specific sites is available on DEQ's Webpage at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/nwr/ph.htm>, and is updated as work proceeds.

As outlined in the Portland Harbor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is the lead agency for upland sites (cleanup-sites along the banks of the Harbor), and will be using the state cleanup law to investigate and remediate contamination. DEQ is working closely with EPA as determinations are made as to whether these upland sites are sources of sediment contamination.

Technical Assistance Grant To Be Awarded

The Environmental Protection Agency is in the process of awarding a \$50,000 Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) to Willamette Riverkeeper. A Technical Assistance Grant is offered for each Superfund Site so community members can better understand scientific and technical information related to the investigation and cleanup of contamination.

Willamette Riverkeeper will act as a community resource, sharing their findings with the community.

Public Involvement

This past July, representatives of EPA and DEQ spent a day conducting community interviews. EPA Project Manager Wallace Reid, DEQ Project Coordinator Kim Cox and EPA Community Involvement Coordinator met with representatives of various sectors of the community, including neighborhood associations, community groups and business associations. Some concerns and comments raised during those meetings include:

- The Agencies should consider the economic impact of the cleanup on shipping and the jobs it provides.
- People who eat fish from the river need to be made aware of potential risks
- Use local communication tools such as community radio, local newspapers and neighborhood association meetings
- “Polluter Pays” principle saddles existing property owners with cleaning up historical contamination they did not cause
- Provide easy to understand, consistent information

EPA’s guidance on developing Community Involvement Plans requires the Agency to conduct community interviews to learn more about issues and outreach needs. The interviews will be used to help focus public involvement activities and outreach materials so they meet the needs of the community.

Human Health Risk Assessment

A federal agency called the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is working on the public health impacts of the Superfund Site and playing an active role in the cleanup of Portland Harbor. ATSDR is required to assess the potential health risks to the public from Superfund sites within one year of the site being proposed for listing. The ATSDR looks at possible ways the contaminants could reach humans through the air, water, soil or food chain. Representatives from ATSDR are working with the Portland Harbor Team and the Oregon Health Division, and will be providing some preliminary information later this year. For more information on ATSDR’s work on Portland Harbor, contact Dan Holcomb, Health Communications Specialist, at 404-639-6064 ordwh6@cdc.gov.

EPA Continues With Negotiations

EPA continues negotiations with a group of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) for the Portland Harbor Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RIFS). Negotiations are proceeding well, and all parties are working towards signed agreements by this fall.

For additional information, contact
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